DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 316 545 SP 032 235

AUTHOR	Baron, Barbara
TITLE	Assessment for National Teacher Certification. ERIC Digest 7-88.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	88
CONTRACT	400-83-0022
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Evaluation Methods; Higher Education; *National Programs; Preservice Teacher Education; State Standards; *Teacher Certification; *Teacher Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests; *National Teacher Certification

ABSTRACT

All but two of the states are in the process of implementing some form of mandatory teacher testing, if they have not already done so. However, the limitations of state procedures, i.e., different standards, approaches, and requirements, combined with significant improvement in evaluation techniques, have led to the call for a system of national assessment. This Digest discusses what national teacher certification will mean and what it will consist of. The potential effect on teachers of national assessment and certification is considered. Citations from the ERIC database are included. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED316545

ASSESSMENT FOR NATIONAL TEACHER CERTIFICATION

Barbara Baron

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP032235

CLEARINGHOUSE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-SP 88-7

Assessment for National Teacher Certification

The concept of teacher testing has gained wide acceptance, as reflected in its extension to 48 states. All but Alaska and Iowa are in the process of, or have already implemented some form of mandatory teacher testing, as of April 1987 (Rudner, 1987). The limitations of state procedures, i.e., different standards, approaches and requirements (McCaleb, 1987), combined with significant improvement in evaluation techniques have led to the call for a system of national assessment.

The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, convened for the purpose of improving education and teaching, responded to the need for national criteria by launching the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in 1987. Changes initiated by the Board are expected to transform teaching (albeit gradually) from an undervalued, underpaid profession to one enjoying higher standards, better salaries, and prestige. Teacher education, in the process, would be enhanced as pedagogical institutions consider, and respond to the requirements of a national criterion.

What Will National Certification Mean?

The first national certificates are expected to be issued in 1993. National certification will signify the achievement of a certain level of accomplishment in content area knowledge and teaching ability. It will be voluntary, in contrast to state licensing or certification, which is required by every state. Candidates for national certification will undergo a variety of assessments that will be scored according to criteria shaped by members of the profession. A number of procedural issues remain to be decided regarding certification, such as duration, i.e., should certification be valid for limited periods subject to renewal or for a professional lifetime; and eligibility, i.e., should certification be valid for limited periods subject to renewal or for a professional lifetime; and eligibility, i.e., should certification be offered to beginning or experienced teachers, or both. (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1988.)

What Will National Certification Testing Consist Of?

The Board has not made any firm decisions but it has generally agreed that the assessment process will cover subject knowledge; generic teaching knowledge (e.g., what a biology teacher should know about anticipating and overcoming difficulties students might have in understanding photosynthesis); and evaluations of teacher performance. The assessment techniques being considered include simulations of classroom situations, observations of teachers in a school setting, interviews, essays, multiple choice examinations, oral defenses of teaching portfolios, and various combinations of these technologies. The tests will permit multiple correct answers where appropriate, in view of the complexity of teaching and the diversity and pluralism of education in the United States (Ibid.).

SP032235

The Board will solicit research proposals for developing assessment tests as it implements its research and development agenda.

In the meantime, the Carnegie Corporation has been funding research by the Teacher Assessment Project (TAP) at Stanford University's School of Education to explore alternative modes of teacher assessment. In 1986-87, TAP research focused on assessing teacher competencies in elementary math and high school history. TAP developed and field-tested prototypes in these areas to define testing specifications for an assessment center (Teacher Assessment Project Newsletter, Summer 1988). Each prototype targeted a limited area, viz., fifth grade fractions and the American revolution at the secondary level, on the theory that workable models in narrow areas must be developed before assessments in each content-area could be designed (Olson, 1988).

The Project is currently extending the assessment center format and exploring on-site documentation through portfolio development as a means of assessing elementary literacy and high school biology. The portfolio would be a diversified sample of a teacher's best work that would be combined with assessments to decide the professional excellence of a candidate for certification. Samples of a teacher's work might include planning a unit, teaching a lesson with resources other than a textbook, and evaluating student progress (Teacher Assessment Project Newsletter, Fall-Winter 1988). The candidate might also be required to provide reflective commentaries and contributions from actual classroom experiences (Nelson-Barber, 1988).

In addition, TAP is exploring productive ways for its prototypes to be used in curriculum and program development. It is collaborating with teacher education programs serving diverse populations that can undertake some formative uses of assessment. These include the City College of New York, Florida A&M University, Pan American University in Texas, the University Alaska-Fairbanks, and an Ohio Consortium of Schools, including Wright State University, Central State University, the University of Dayton, and the Dayton Public Schools. TAP has also organized two working seminars to examine how new assessments and procedures could be designed to minimize biases that unfairly disadvantage minority students, and to reveal strengths not apparent in other types of teacher assessments (Teacher Assessment Project Newsletter, Fall-Winter, 1988).

What Effect Might National Assessment and Certification Have on Teachers?

"The true test of the new approaches to assessment . . . will be whether they contribute to the needed reforms of teaching and teacher education" (Shulman, 1987). However, change of any sort warrants caution. The introduction of a special status into the profession may create an elite group of teachers who receive

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES FOR TEACHER EDUCATION
One Dupont Circle • Suite 610 • Washington, DC 20036

choice classroom assignments, staff development opportunities, preference for advancement, and access to outside resources. It could violate teachers' traditional sense of equality and move them to boycott certification. It could also provoke resentment that might undermine the cooperative spirit so vital to the operation of every school (Shulman & Sykes, 1986).

Voluntary certification is also likely to create uncertain status for teachers who fail to qualify, leading some teachers to avoid the process because of the stigma that may accompany failure. In addition, there is the possibility that assessment procedures will have an adverse impact on minority groups (Ibid.).

These potential problems are not insurmountable, however. They can be dealt with by ensuring procedural fairness, i.e., giving teachers an equal chance to succeed. The Board can facilitate this by publishing preparatory materials for the exam, sponsoring regional training sessions to help teachers prepare, permitting the exam to be retaken, and establishing an assessment standard that a majority of teachers can meet. The Board could then gradually raise its standards as assessment-related knowledge is absorbed into the curriculum and the competence of new teachers increases (Ibid.).

In addition, there are distinct advantages to a national assessment for teachers. A nationwide standard paves the way for increased mobility and professional development opportunities, assuming states eventually adopt board standards and exempt nationally certified out-of-state teachers from routine testing requirements. National assessment is also more efficient. It eliminates duplication in the research and development of testing and permits states to profit from economies of scale. Furthermore, the combination of state resources is bound to result in a better assessment product than any one state could develop with the necessarily limited funds at its disposal. Finally, national assessment facilitates the development of a codified knowledge base, essential for the professionalization of teachers. Without such a base, teaching will not be accorded the legitimacy given other professions (Ibid.).

References

Many of the following references—those identified with an EJ or ED number—have been abstracted and are in the ERIC database. The journal articles should be available at most research libraries. The documents (citations with an ED number) are available on microfiche in ERIC microfiche collections at more than 700 locations. Documents also can be ordered through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service. Call (800) 227-3742 for price and order information. For a list of ERIC collections in your area or for information on submitting documents to ERIC, contact the ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 293-2450.

McCaleb, Joseph. (Ed.) (1987) *How do teachers communicate? A review and critique of assessment practices.* (Chapter 1) Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education. ED 282 872.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. (1988) Institutional brochure. Washington, D.C.

Nelson-Barber, Sharon. (Ed.) (1988) *Thinking Out Loud. Proceedings of the Teacher Assessment Project Forum on Equity in Teacher Assessment.* (p. 39) Stanford, CA: Stanford University School of Education.

Olson, Lynn. (1988, June 8). "Capturing teaching's essence: Stanford team tests new methods". *Education Week,* 7 (37), 20.

Rudner, Lawrence M. et al. (1987) *What's happening in teacher testing: An analysis of state teacher testing practices.* (p. 1) Washington, D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. ED 284 867.

Shulman, Lee S. (1987) "Assessment for teaching: An initiative for the profession." *Phi Delta Kappan,* 69 (1), 38-44.

Shulman, Lee S. and Sykes, Gary. (1986) *A national board for teachers? In search of a bold standard.* (p. 24, 43) Paper prepared for the Task Force on Teaching as a Profession. Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy. New York: Carnegie Corporation.

Teacher Assessment Project. (1988) *Elementary literacy component of the teacher assessment project: Research program overview.* (p. 1-2) Stanford, CA: Stanford University School of Education.

_____ (1988, Summer) *Newsletter.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University School of Education, 2 (1), 1, 3.

_____. (1988, Fall-Winter) *Newsletter.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University School of Education. 2 (2), 1-3, 7-9.

ERIC CLEARINGHOUSE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

Mary E. Dilworth, Director
Margaret E. Mann, Associate Director
Barbara Baron, Staff Writer

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-83-0022. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department.

ERIC

Educational Resources Information Center: The nationwide information system initiated in 1966 by the U.S. Department of Education. ERIC is the largest and most frequently used education data base in the world.